The troubles of Uncle Jack

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The troubles of Uncle Jack

by orphan_account

Summary

In which Uncle Jack is actually Will's uncle, Will is a sassy teenager and Hannibal is intrigued.
CW: mentions of a car accident, mentions of suicide, a 19 year age gap, also a Peter/Will relationship (but Hannigram is endgame)

Notes

I'm very excited to share this fic, I've done a lot of writing since my country has gone into lockdown, and have the whole fic written out, so this will be updated every other day. Please heed the content warnings and tags and I hope you enjoy :)

Uncle Jack

It was sudden.

People always said that. Jack would know, he worked for the FBI. But it was the only way he could describe it. One minute Jack had been reviewing case reports half asleep and the next Bella was stood over him crying.

Charlie was dead. “A car accident,” Bella bit out. Charlie was dead. The words rang in Jack’s head.

Charlie who always said the same jokes over and over again, laughing uproariously every time. Charlie who always considered himself a whiskey connoisseur. Charlie who always had a kind word for everyone.

Charlie who had a son. A son who had stayed at home. A son who was alive.

“We have to take him in,” Bella whispered. “Eleanor and Grace have too much on their hands, it has to be us – we’re all he has left.” All Jack could do was nod and nod and nod until he couldn’t anymore.

Jack had known Will before the accident, of course. He had met the boy several times in fact. He had been a quiet child that Will; always kept to himself, didn’t try to show off like Bella’s other nieces and nephews. Jack had always liked that about him. Not that they had ever interacted very much. Will had always preferred staying with Bella, listening to her spin yarn after yarn of various childhood adventures with her brother and sisters.

Will had always idolised his father.

Jack would always remember the last time he had spoken to Will before the accident – eleven years before, if he remembered correctly. “What do you want to be when you grow up Will?” he had asked.

“My Daddy!” Will had said with a very serious face and Jack and Charlie had chuckled.

“Thatta boy!” Charlie had all but shouted with a grin, while Jack leaned forwards with a smile.

“You mean you want to be like your Dad, right?”

“No I wanna be my Daddy. But with dogs.” Charlie had burst into laughter and Jack had studied Will and thought, what a curious child.

Jack knew Will had grown up. He had to have; time had passed after all. Jack was expecting a teenager. But for all he had prepared himself, he could never have prepared himself for the ways in which 16 year old Will Graham invaded his life.

"Your room is the one in the corner. Please, make yourself at home." Bella's voice was warm, welcoming. Jack thought it was most alive she'd sounded in months. He quickly squandered that thought and focused on the young man in front of him. He was tall for his age, Jack noted, his wiry frame accentuated by the oversized plaid he wore – one Jack could have sworn he'd seen on Charlie before. His hair had grown out, the curls hugging his ears. He had glasses too, with thick square frames. Jack had never remembered Charlie mentioning anything about Will needing glasses.

"Thank you. I err, I brought Winston's bed with me, I was hoping he could sleep in the same room." Will's voice was low and rough with a slight drawl. It was so different to how Jack remembered it that all he could do was blink. That was, until Bella shot him a pointed stare. Jack cleared his throat.

"That's fine" he said, suddenly feeling inadequate. The air felt heavy, suffocating and all words left Jack's head. "That's fine," he repeated. "We should leave you to unpack, if you need anything just tell us. We're here for you."

"Thanks," Will said again. He shifted his shoulders, eyes darting, words seemingly as trapped in him as they were for Jack. He settled for nodding curtly and turned to walk into his room dragging his small suitcase behind him on squeaky wheels.

Jack sighed and Bella echoed him. Their eyes met and she smiled softly. "He'll speak to us when he needs to, I'm sure of it. Until then he just needs his space. It's been a traumatic last few days after all." Jack nodded. He hoped his wife was right. She usually was.

Winston arrived later that afternoon and Jack smiled sadly at seeing him. He had remembered when Charlie had called with the announcement of a puppy, could remember the way the man had laughed as he had said "I couldn't help it – Will's puppy dog eyes are a force to be reckoned with, it was only a matter of time." Will had apparently found the puppy attempting to climb into their bin and immediately decided he was to be called Winston. "What a grand name for such a small little dog", Charlie had remarked. Well, Winston wasn't so small anymore. He reached Jack's knees as Jack leant down to ruffle his fur.

"Will," he called, facing the stairs. "Winston's here!" At the sound of Will's name Winston yipped excitedly, and at the sight of the man almost tripping over himself getting down the stairs Winston bounded at him, tail wagging furiously. Jack smile grew at how happy Will suddenly seemed. It looked good on him. Made him seem younger, more like the Will Jack once knew.

Will settled in quickly and life soon returned to how it had been before. Will kept to his room and Jack barely saw him, especially with the serial abductions they were chasing after at work. Jack's hours grew later and later. He was shocked when he returned home at three in the morning one day to Winston's relentless barking. He received a call and saw it was Bella. He picked up, heart thumping in his chest. "What's going on," he barked.

"Where are you?" Bella asked.

"Just outside," Jack answered. "What's going on?"

"Look up," Bella said. So look up he did.

"Jesus! Is that Will?!" Jack shouted, knowing the answer before he got it.

"Yes."

Perched precariously on the edge of their roof, in his boxers, stood Will. Before he knew what he was doing, Jack barged into the house and ran up the stairs. He found Bella in Wills room peering out of the window, gripping the edges. She looked at him eyes tight. "He's not answering", she said, worry colouring her voice. Jack shook his head and clambered onto the roof. Carefully, ever so carefully, he inched closer to the boy. For that was what Will was, in that moment more so than ever. As Jack approached, he noticed how gaunt Will was, shivering and sweating and shaking. Jack grabbed Will and turned him around in one swift motion to find Will's eyes shut. "Will?" he asked stunned. "Will!" he stepped back dragging Will with him and then shook him gently. "Will!"

Will's eyes snapped open, a snapshot of stormy seas. "Wha-?" He quickly looked around him and his shivering amped up. "What's - what's going on? Why are we – is this the roof?!" Will's voice bordered on hysterics and Jack tried to rub his shoulder in what he hoped was a soothing way.

"Let's get inside, Will, you must be freezing. Come on."

Bella grabbed at Will, helping him in, once they reached the window and Jack grunted as he followed the boy back inside, shutting the window closed behind them. Once they had all sat on Will's bed, Jack broke the silence. "What do you remember Will?"

"Nothing I just – I just closed my eyes. I swear I closed them for a second and then, then you were there, shouting." Jack looked at Will, who didn't meet his eyes, then looked away again. "Will, are you – I have to ask – are you suicidal Will?"

"What? I- I-" Will's voice trailed off. He finally met Jack's gaze and he looked so terrified it shook Jack to his core. "I don't know, Uncle Jack. How can I not know?"

"He needs help," Bella whispered. About half an hour had passed and Jack and Bella laid together in bed, face to face, Jack's arms around her tight. "Don't you know someone who

can help him, Jack? A psychiatrist of some sort? What about that nice lady we met last year – Doctor Bloom, was it?" Jack let out a breath and nodded slightly.

"Yeah, I'll call her tomorrow. I promise. Now get some sleep. You deserve it."

Jack studied Will carefully the next morning. The boy looked, well, rumpled was the only word Jack found that fit him. He clearly hadn't slept, eyes red rimmed. He kept biting at his fingers like an animal when he thought Jack wasn't looking, until Jack strategically passed him a coffee. Jack felt a pang deep inside him. How had he not noticed what Will was going through, in his own house? Bella had tried to tell him something was wrong and Jack had brushed her off. No longer.

After breakfast Jack called Alana Bloom. "Doctor Bloom," he said pleasantly. "I must speak with you. I have a patient for you. No, not work related, he's a – well, he's a relative of mine."

He quickly sketched out the situation for her and sighed when she replied with a hesitant "I'm so sorry, Jack. I can't take any patients at the moment; I have my hands full." Jack was about to hang up when she hummed. "Actually, I may know someone who can help. He was a mentor of mine, during my residency at Johns Hopkins, a very kind man and an excellent psychiatrist. Yes, his name is Hannibal Lecter. Let me give you his address. I can send you his paper as well if you are interested – on the 'Evolutionary Origins of Social Exclusion'"

Jack read the paper and was impressed.

Jack then met Doctor Lecter and was impressed.

Jack's first impression of Doctor Lecter was: 'he's perfect'. The man was polite, that was the foremost thing about him. Polite, easy to talk to and a good listener, exactly what one needed in a psychiatrist. As they spoke, Jack admired Doctor Lecter's neat office, his drawings and his décor. A multi-talented man, clearly, which bode well. As they finished up the pleasantries, Jack decided to bring up Will. "Erm," he started, "I need you to help me with a psychological assessment."

Doctor Lecter nodded slowly. "And who might I be assessing?"

"My nephew, a boy called Will. Well, my wife's nephew really."

"Why do you believe your wife's nephew requires a psychological assessment?"

Jack sighed. "He said – he said he can't tell whether or not he's suicidal. He's clearly troubled. His father passed recently, you see, and they had always been close."

Something glinted in Doctor Lecter's eyes. Intrigue perhaps? Jack didn't know the man well enough to tell. "I understand. I must ask, how old is this boy? I don't usually take on younger patients."

"Will is 16," Jack replied. "Very mature for his age, though, very reserved."

"I see. Well, I will offer my services, for the usual fee of course."

"Of course," Jack grinned. "Thank you very much for your help Doctor, I appreciate it."

Jack whistled all the way home.

"A psychiatrist?" Will's voice held an incredulous tone to it. "Uncle Jack, I've been seen by psychiatrists before and it hasn't always gone well. In fact it never has. I hate being psychoanalyzed and I see through all their tricks. And they get too intrigued, to the point where I feel they'll never let me go."

Jack tried to look understanding. "I know Will, I've – I'd heard from your Dad," at that, Will shook visibly. Jack tried to ignore it as he carried on; "but Doctor Lecter is different, I'm sure. He's very professional. As for you seeing through their tricks, well maybe you're not trying hard enough to go along with them."

"If you say so Uncle Jack."

And that was the end of that.

That evening Jack told Bella he had found Will a psychiatrist. "That's great," Bella smiled. "What did you say his name was again, the psychiatrist?"

"I didn't," Jack answered. "His name is Hannibal Lecter. Doctor Hannibal Lecter."

Bella gave him a curious look, then smiled again. "I've heard of him. All good things – he should be good for Will." Jack nodded. "Speaking of things that are good for Will," Bella continued, "we really should get around to enrolling him in a new school. He needs to socialise again. With people his own age."

Jack rubbed his forehead. "School! I forgot he needed school. You're right. I'll get on that tomorrow."

He did. He called several schools until he found a nice sounding private school who were willing to take Will in the next Monday. They were expensive but expense was no problem and Will deserved the best, especially after the month he'd had.

“A private school – I can’t go to a private school, Uncle Jack!”

“Why not?” Jack asked, trying to keep his tone reasonable.

“I don’t behave well enough to fit in to a private school.”

“And why aren’t you behaving?” Jack snarled, starting to lose patience.

“I don’t do it purposefully; I just find it difficult to focus. Too many people, too much noise, I fidget a lot – it helps me concentrate but bothers everyone else. I’m not used to being in the same school for more than a month.”

“Well get used to it!” Jack snapped. He rubbed at his eyes and then spoke again, trying to soften his voice. “Maybe that’s why you need a private school, Will, they’ll offer you more support. It’ll probably have smaller classes than you’re used to too, won’t that help?”

Will sighed. “I guess,” he said. “It’s worth a try. Sorry. I just – I don’t need a private school; I was fine just going where Daddy went and learning from him. It’s a big change is all.”

Jack nodded. “I understand Will, I get it I really do, which is why this and Doctor Lecter will be a good start for you. They really will.”

Will met his gaze for a split second. “I hope so.”

School

Chapter Summary

Will starts school.

Chapter Notes

This chapter is very important for story set-up reasons but I also think it's the slowest out of all the chapters so sorry about that and I promise it picks up again next chapter :)

School was just as Will had expected it to be – chaos. As he entered, the hallway was packed with people and he had to push his way through to the reception area. As he looked at the receptionist, he noticed how much she hated her job. He tried not to, but he quickly fell into her head, her thoughts.

That kid is so frustrating why won't he listen? (she stared at the offending boy, lips turned downward) and *why won't my girlfriend text me back?* (she smelt of two different perfumes and her eyes kept darting to her phone, hands twitching impatiently as she held it) and *where are those reports?* (her foot kicking the back of the table, her reports pushed to the side all finished in neat cursive) and –

Will imagined shaking her mind off him, it falling to pieces, speared by the foundations of the fort he built to protect himself.

His ability to read people had been tough on a child, but as he grew it only became worse. He was able to pick up more, more easily each time, until it took only a glance to understand the general gist of a person. He hated it. Made sure to look at people as little as possible. It had been so easy at Uncle Jack's house, where it was mostly just him and Winston and Aunty Phyllis – at least when she wasn't at work or her secret doctor's appointments. He knew them well, didn't need to build up any defences when they were familiar and comforting. He had forgotten what it was like to be in the outside world, where he needed to shield himself off from everyone. Forts helped. His glasses helped. He focused his eyes on the thick frame until everything blurred out and counted backwards from ten. When he finished he let everything swim back into focus.

The receptionist was staring at him. He tried his best to ignore it and walked up to where she sat. “Hello.” He tried smiling but thought it probably came across as a grimace so stopped. “I’m Will Graham. Just transferred here.”

She stared at him for a few more seconds before snapping into motion, pulling papers towards her. “Yes, yes, of course. They told me about you. If you could sign these and I’ll give you your timetable.” Will took the papers and leant against the table to quickly scrawl his signature onto them. The bell rang and he flinched at the loud noise but allowed his shoulders to slacken with relief as people started to file into their various classrooms. When he gave back the papers it was just him and the receptionist. “Here’s your timetable. Your first class is English. The room is just down the corridor to the left.”

Will nodded and attempted a smile again. “Thank you.”

English went better than expected, Will was sat next to a boy called Matthew who was eager to share notes with him. Perhaps a bit too eager, but Will just ignored that and built his forts taller and taller. In History, students were put into pairs and Will was paired with a boy called Peter. Peter was quiet with a stutter and Will actually found himself enjoying his company. Art was next and Will again found himself enjoying the class, working quietly on a drawing of Winston.

It wasn’t until Biology with the headmaster Mason Verger that Will became worried again.

Headmaster Verger was a bully and a brute, there was no other way to put it. Anyone who didn’t answer the question with the exact wording he wanted was told to stand up and then thoroughly ridiculed in front of the class. Will was disgusted and barely breathed the whole class, refusing to look anywhere near the headmaster, his hands clenched into fists by his sides. When the class finished and the bell for lunch rang, he buried his head in his hands waiting until patterns swirled in front of him before he opened his eyes again.

A girl stood before him, with pretty long black hair and warm blue eyes. “Hi,” she said, her voice whisper-soft.

“Hi,” Will croaked. “Are all of his classes like that?”

The girl let out a timid laugh. “Yeah, pretty much. Everyone hates him, he’s terrifying. Apparently one time he made a kid cry so hard, he collected the tears in a bottle. Don’t know if that’s actually true though.” She paused. “I’m Abigail by the way, nice to meet you.”

“I’m Will.” Will got up and started collecting his things. Abigail stayed near him and he darted a glance at her, shields up high.

“You’re new right? I was just wondering if you wanted to come sit with me and my friend Marissa, so you’re not all alone.” There was something strange in her voice that made Will pause. He could look – just one look and he would figure out why she really wanted him to sit with her. It would be so easy.

Will eyed the door instead, his safe exit. “Sorry,” he said, “I told Peter I’d sit with him.”

“Oh okay.” Abigail sounded relieved. It made Will feel relieved too, like he had dodged a bullet.

He got up and walked away, leaving Abigail stood alone in the classroom.

Will and Peter ate lunch in relative silence but when they finished, they found a topic they both had in common – a love for animals. Will showed Peter his many photos of Winston on his phone and in turn Peter showed videos of his pet rat Kevin and some birds he had rescued. Being with Peter was easy; he didn’t care about Will’s oddities and Will didn’t care about his. It felt like a bubble of just the two of them and their animal companions, the rest of the world cut away, not for them to worry about. It was comfortable.

The rest of the day fled by barely noticeable. Will went home (and when had he started thinking of Aunty Phyllis’s house as home?) exhausted. He collapsed on his bed next to Winston and sighed, his head aching and eyes swimming. The aftereffects of hanging around too many people. Will hadn’t missed those.

He woke slowly, feeling uncomfortable and sweaty. There was a heavy weight on his front and he lashed out, trying to get away, but it just tightened. Will forced his eyes open and realised the weight was Uncle Jack. Of course it was Uncle Jack. “Will! Will!” he heard faintly. He shook his head and suddenly everything was overly bright and overly loud and overly suffocating. “I can’t–” he gasped. “I can’t breathe.” And he couldn’t, it felt like he was drowning, drowning in his own sweat and tears and Uncle Jack’s shouts were getting louder and suddenly Will was shaking and shaking and shaking and he couldn’t stop, why couldn’t he stop? Abruptly, Uncle Jack’s shouting stopped and Will was released – he closed his eyes and sunk to the floor in a crumpled sobbing heap.

There were sounds of movement and then he could hear Aunty Phyllis’s voice say “breathe for me Will. Breathe in, like this” she took a deep breath and Will tried to copy but was shaking too hard to do so properly.

“That’s right, now count.

One…

two…

three…

four…

five…

six…

and breathe out."

Will exhaled sharply and then gulped in some more air desperately. Aunty Phyllis continued with her counting and as she went on, he managed to keep to it for longer and longer.

He couldn't tell how much time had passed when they finally stopped. His breathing had resumed to mostly normal and he looked up at her. She smiled and gave him a hand up.

Minutes later they all sat in the kitchen, Will nursing a cup of hot chocolate Aunty Phyllis had made for him. "What happened?" he asked, staring at the shine of the wooden table under his hands.

"We found you trying to leave the house. Clearly you were sleepwalking again, Will. You can't let this become a habit."

Will swallowed. "I can't let – Uncle Jack, do you think I want this to become a habit?" Will's voice rose and rose in an uncontrollable crescendo. "Maybe, maybe I want to die. Maybe I don't want to deal with everything anymore without my Daddy there to help me. Like he, like he always said he would be. Maybe this is my subconscious taking over. But I can't control this!"

Aunty Phyllis leaned forward. "Oh Will. You need to talk about these things, if not with us then please talk to Doctor Lecter on Wednesday about it. You need an outlet."

"Yeah, okay, okay. Right now all I need is aspirin and sleep."

So Will took his aspirin and went to sleep.

Thankfully he didn't sleepwalk again.

Thankfully his sleep was dreamless.

Tuesday went much the same as Monday except slower. Everything seemed to drag except lunchtime with Peter which sped by too quickly. It was as if Will was waiting for his psychiatric appointment without realising it. Maybe he was looking forward to getting it over and done with, he thought.

Matthew was even more eager than the day before, even though Will didn't really need his notes anymore, but Will just locked up that information and buried it deep in the basement of his fort. When a boy used the word round instead of rotund headmaster Verger called him "a useless round little piggy" and proceeded to make pig noises throughout the rest of the class. Abigail didn't try to speak to Will that day and he didn't try speaking to her.

He went home.

He tried to sleep.

He sleepwalked again.

After the whole process of having to be shaken awake again, Will collapsed in bed cuddling Winston and counted backwards from 1000 in twos. When he finished, he did it in threes and then in fours and so on until it was daylight again.

He didn't sleep. He was glad. He didn't know what he would have done if he sleepwalked again but it wouldn't have been pretty.

Wednesday went past even slower than Tuesday but finally it turned 7:30, Will's appointment slot.

"7:30?" He had asked, "Isn't that quite late?"

"It's the only slot he had, and it gives us time to get there," Uncle Jack had grunted.

Doctor Hannibal Lecter's office was also in Baltimore Maryland and Uncle Jack drove Will there. It was a relatively short drive which Will was relieved by. It wasn't that he didn't like Uncle Jack, he just, always felt awkward around him – intimidated by his commanding presence and booming voice. He made Will feel small and insignificant.

Doctor Lecter's office was large, the hallway regal looking. Uncle Jack deposited Will in a surprisingly comfortable chair and said, "I'll pick you up in an hour." And he was gone.

The waiting room was well lit and welcoming, painted in cool tones. There was no secretary although there was a desk for one to sit at. Weird, thought Will. The psychiatrist clearly had the money to hire one.

At precisely 7:30 the door opened and Will startled. He glanced over the figure in the doorway: tall, handsome with stark features and soft fair hair. Perfectly tailored clothes with

warm colours, someone who clearly cared about presentation. “You must be Will Graham,” he said his voice rich with an unfamiliar accent, perhaps Eastern European? Will nodded a bit delayed. “Please, come in,” Doctor Lecter gestured to his office.

So Will went in.

Doctor Lecter

Chapter Summary

Will has therapy

Chapter Notes

Finally Will has his meeting with Doctor Lecter - I had a lot of fun writing this chapter and I hope you enjoy :)

Doctor Hannibal Lecter's office was huge, neatly organised with a large library and a strong burgundy and beige colour scheme. Will felt comfortable immediately and that irked him. He wasn't one to feel comfortable easily. Will stood awkwardly while Doctor Lecter closed the door and sat down in one of two chairs in the centre of the room. "Please, take a seat."

"Okay," Will said and sat down. The chair was extremely comfortable and he sank into it with a sigh, maybe the session wouldn't be so bad, he thought. Then Doctor Lecter had to ruin the moment by talking.

"Jack told me your father passed away. Would you like to discuss his passing?"

Will couldn't help but let out a laugh. "Wow," he rubbed at his face roughly, "you really don't beat around the bush, do you?" He placed his hands in his lap, resisting the urge to tap out a pattern. "To be honest, I don't want to talk about it but I will because I know I should. You're the expert after all." Will winced at the sarcasm he'd put into the word "expert" but Doctor Lecter didn't seem fazed. In fact he seemed almost amused? That couldn't be right. Will shook his head. "Also I hate the word passing. It's too gentle a word for death – death is meant to be harsh and final."

"So how did he die then?"

"A car accident. A hit and run apparently. The coward didn't even admit their mistake." Will could feel his anger rising in him and tried desperately to tamp it down. Doctor Lecter seemed to notice.

“This is a safe space Will, feel free to say whatever you like.”

Will laughed again. “You wouldn’t like it if I spoke freely Doctor. I’m not exactly polite.” Doctor Lecter’s breathing froze for a split second before returning to normal. It was practically imperceptible but Will picked it up – of course he had to pick it up. “Yeah politeness is very important to you, isn’t it, Doctor Lecter? I can tell.”

“How can you tell?” Doctor Lecter asked.

“How I can tell anything – by looking. I’m very good at reading people. It’s a curse.”

“A curse can often be a blessing in disguise.”

Will scoffed. “Well, if it is, it’s a very good disguise.”

Doctor Lecter smiled showing off sharp teeth and it took Will’s breath away. “Polite or not, feel free to use this space however you’d like.”

Will could only smile back. “I appreciate the offer Doctor. If that’s the case then I’ll say this: I wish I could inflict a quarter of the pain I’ve felt since my Daddy’s death on the person who killed him.” Doctor Lecter looked like he wanted to ask more but wouldn’t because that would be rude, and rudeness was unspeakably ugly. Will quickly changed the subject before the good doctor changed his mind. “And I’ve felt a lot of pain since my Daddy’s death. I feel like I’m drowning, I can’t focus on anything, I’m experiencing panic attacks. Oh and I’m sleepwalking too. Severely.”

“How severely?”

“Very. I almost walked off the roof.”

“Interesting,” Doctor Lecter murmured. “Jack mentioned possible suicidal thoughts.”

“Yeah, life doesn’t really feel worth living anymore.”

“Is there anything that makes you feel alive still? Anything that ignites a fire in your bones, encourages your heart to keep pumping?”

“My anger and whiskey.”

Doctor Lecter gave Will what had to be his best scrutinising look. “You’re underage.”

“My Daddy didn’t care,” Will laughed “and Uncle Jack doesn’t know I know about his stash. I can be sneaky that way.”

Doctor Lecter smiled again. “Tell me about your father, Will.”

“He wasn’t a good man. That’s the first thing you need to know; if anyone tells you he was a good man they’re a liar. He often started bar brawls for no reason, he had a high temper that he never kept in check, he drank too much. But he was good to me. He was the best father one could ever want.”

“He was protective of you, and you are protective of him”

Will grinned, for once not worried what that looked like and said “exactly.”

Hannibal grinned back.

“How was therapy?” Jack asked, as they made their way back to the car.

“Good, I think Doctor Lecter understands me as well as I understand him.”

“Good, good.” They entered the car and drove in silence for about ten minutes before Jack spoke up again. “What did you talk about?” Will desperately wanted to say ‘what do you think we talked about’ or, ‘none of your business’ but decided the trouble it would get him into wasn’t worth it.

“We talked about Daddy,” Will said instead.

“Oh, good. You know Will,” Jack looked at him, “your father was a very good man.” Will resisted the urge to laugh.

“Yeah,” he said. “Doctor Lecter prescribed me some meds. Said they would help with my panic attacks and sleepwalking, hopefully.”

Jack sounded relieved when he said “that’s great Will. We’ll pick them up tomorrow.”

They picked them up the next day and Will hoped they would work.

They worked. They took almost two weeks to work but they worked.

Those two weeks passed as normal. Will got closer and closer to Peter to the point where they texted pretty much all the time. Abigail continued to ignore Will and Will ignored her back. Headmaster Verger made fun of more and more students but somehow Will continued to pass under his radar. Will became more and more intrigued with Hannibal despite himself.

The first time Will woke up in bed and not anywhere else he cried with relief. Then he made plans. He had noticed certain feelings making themselves known from deep within him. Feelings he'd never really considered before. Feelings for Peter. The thing was, he had noticed those feelings in Peter too. And, as he was no longer a sleepwalking mess, Will could finally bring himself to do something about it.

He brought it up at dinner that evening.

"Aunty Phyllis, I have a question." It was just Will and Aunty Phyllis (and Winston, of course). Uncle Jack had another late night again.

"Go ahead dear," Aunty Phyllis answered.

"Can I invite Peter over tomorrow?"

"Peter? You've never mentioned him before." Will denied himself the urge to laugh. He hadn't mentioned Peter before because him and the Crawfords barely spoke apart from after sleepwalking incidents and that was always only ever for them to express their concern.

"Well, can I invite him?"

"Of course."

Peter seemed nervous to enter the Crawford's house. Will shot him an encouraging smile and Peter joined him inside. "Hey Aunty Phyllis? I'm here with Peter!" Aunty Phyllis walked down the stairs with a smile. "You must be Peter, it's lovely to meet you."

"N-nice to meet you t-too" Peter said, shaking her hand and looking at Will all the while.

Will could sense his discomfort and said "here, let me introduce you to Winston." Peter's relief was palpable. Animals he understood, animals he could deal with. After all, animals would never kill to kill, only humans did that.

They went to Will's room and Will winced at it. Not because it was messy but because it didn't look lived in. Despite the rumpled bed and the worn dog bed there was no sign anyone lived there. It may have become a home to Will but it still wasn't his proper home and he suddenly missed his Daddy so fucking much. They'd never had much and they'd moved all the time but it was his Daddy's presence, his larger than life laugh that made a place a home. Will looked over at Peter and found him hugging Winston with a good ruffle of his fur. "Winston likes you better than he likes my aunt and uncle," Will remarked.

"R-r-really?" Peter asked, beaming so bright it was blinding and Will felt the need to protect the boy with all he had in him. "Really," he replied. He sat on the bed and patted the space next to him. "Why don't you come and sit here?"

"Okay," Peter smiled.

“You have a crush on me, don’t you?” Will asked. Peter’s breathe caught in his throat and Will realised just how tactless he was. He relaxed his stance. “I have a crush on you too,” he forced the words out hurriedly. And there was that grin again, Will automatically smiled back. “You wanna go out?”

“Yes.”

“I have a boyfriend now.” Will announced at dinner time.

“Peter?” asked Aunty Phyllis.

“A boyfriend?” asked Uncle Jack.

“Yes, a boyfriend, that a problem?”

Uncle Jack almost choked on his food. “of course not – I just, I didn’t know you were erm-”

“I’m bi,” Will said. “And Peter’s gay. We have a date planned for Friday.”

“Well I hope you boys have fun,” said Aunty Phyllis, ever the peacekeeper.

“Look, Will, I know I can be… abrasive,” Will held back a scoff, “but I’m your Uncle. I care about you. I would never purposefully hurt you, okay?”

“If you say so, Uncle Jack.”

“I have a boyfriend now.” Will announced to Doctor Lecter.

“Tell me about him.”

“I would kill for him,” Will sighed, rubbing his hand against his pants. “I’m probably too attached, we’ve only been going out for one day really.”

“This is the second time you’ve mentioned murder. Does the thought crop up in your mind often, Will?”

Will leaned back. “Doesn’t it for everyone?”

Doctor Lecter hummed noncommittally. “We’re not here to talk about everyone. We’re here to talk about you.”

“I guess death’s been on my mind a lot since my Dad died. No-one ever even mentions him at -at home. And that hurts. It’s like he’s disappeared off of the earth entirely, like he never existed in the first place. It makes me think, you know, would anyone notice if I died? Would anyone notice if-”

“If?” Doctor Lecter prompted.

“If the people I hate died,” Will whispered.

“Are there many people you fantasize about killing, Will?”

“Now wait a minute Doctor Lecter – I never explicitly said that I fantasized about killing people.”

Doctor Lecter gave him a level look. “Yet you do.”

There was a pause.

“Yet I do,” Will confirmed. He sighed again. “It’s only really two people that I fantasize about killing. Whoever it was that murdered my Daddy and my headmaster.”

Doctor Lecter looked like he was filing away that information. He leaned forwards; body language open. “Why your headmaster, Will?”

“He’s a bully” Will stated simply. “I hate bullies.”

“Have you been bullied before?”

Will’s laugh was a sharp, painful thing. “Of course I have, who hasn’t?”

“What was that like?”

“Terrifying.” Will’s hands went tight, pinching at his legs as the memories rushed through him. “Children can be ruthless. Especially towards freaks.”

“You see yourself as a freak.” It wasn’t a question but Will answered as though it was one anyway.

“Yes. I was always the odd one out wherever we moved. Saw too much, spoke too little. Even more so now that half of me is gone with my Daddy.”

“You see yourself as incomplete now. Why is that?”

“Because I am. Because losing my Daddy broke me and I don’t know if I’ll ever gather back together. I feel fragile, like a tiny china teacup. At my Daddy’s funeral everyone was telling me how strong I am and all I could think was ‘I don’t feel strong’. I just feel empty, numb. Which is why I hope Peter will change that. Maybe I’m being unfair to him, pinning so much hope on him but maybe I’m not. He’s stronger than everyone thinks he is. Definitely stronger than I am.”

“Tell me more about him.”

“He’s smart, intuitive, Really great with animals. He wants to be a vet. He’s so kind and cheerful. He’s been through a lot and he’s still so cheerful. I don’t know how he does it. Sometimes…” Will paused, the words caught up in a tangle of emotions. “Sometimes I wish I could absorb him into me, merge us until we were one being – him the spine and me the eyes. He’s so easy to talk to and look at. He’s a straightforward guy. Says what he thinks. He doesn’t give me a headache like everyone else does.”

Doctor Lecter smiled, “sounds like he’s good for you Will.”

“Yeah,” Will smiled. “Yeah he is.”

“I spoke to my Psychiatrist about you yesterday,” Will told Peter at lunch time the next day.

“Oh.” Peter blushed. “G-g-good things I hope?”

“Of course! You’re important to me Peter. I would never badmouth you.”

“You’re important to me t-too Will” Peter said and it sounded like a confession. Will held it close to him and tucked it away to look back on later. “I’m looking forward to our date t-tomorrow.”

“Me too, Peter, me too.”

Interlude

Chapter Summary

This is a quick interlude

Chapter Notes

I'm sorry this is so short! The next chapter is much longer I promise :)

Jack called Hannibal after Will's appointment. "I just wanted to say," he started when the psychiatrist picked up the phone. "Thank you for taking on Will, I can tell you're being a great influence on him."

"Glad to be of service Jack," Hannibal replied. "I had actually been meaning to speak to you soon. Would you like to come over for dinner tomorrow so we can discuss Will properly?"

"Sounds good doctor, I'll look forward to it. See you tomorrow then."

"Wow, Hannibal, can I call you Hannibal?" At the doctor's slight nod Jack continued. "This food is delicious; I've never had anything like it."

Hannibal smiled, pleased. "I have spent many years perfecting the culinary arts. However, I did not ask you here to discuss dinner, I asked you here to discuss Will Graham. Of course, I would never wish to breach psychiatrist-patient confidentiality-"

"Of course, of course," Jack echoed.

"therefore I won't, I'll only say this: I believe your wife's nephew has a hyper-empathy disorder resulting from an overabundance of mirror neurons that have not melted away since childhood."

Jack hummed, "that would certainly explain a few things. Why he always imitates my posture when we talk, how he always understands what people are trying to say before they say it…"

"Now, Jack, I believe this is the reason you find him so closed off; because he has to close himself off to protect himself from the emotional turmoil of others."

“So what should I do Doctor? I don’t want to crowd the kid.”

“I suggest you give him space, leave him to his own devices. He is still processing his grief on top of everything else. I know it may be difficult, but I would recommend talking to him less until he is in a more stable headspace and has understood how to defend his mind better. Otherwise you would be crowding him, possibly to the point of suffocation.”

Jack let out a loud sigh. “I was afraid you would say that, but I guess it makes sense. Alright, I’ll defer to your expertise here Doctor.”

Dates and Disasters

Chapter Summary

Will and Peter have their first date

Chapter Notes

Sorry this chapters a day late - some family stuff came up so the editing had to wait. I don't know how to feel about this chapter but I've been staring at it too long so I'm just gonna post it.

Peter had wanted their first date to be at the zoo or the aquarium but Will had said that he felt that they were too loud for him to properly enjoy, so in the end they decided to go to Peter's house instead. It was more intimate that way. Peter's parents were both out when they arrived, which Will was glad for. He had his suspicions that they weren't as caring towards their son as they should be considering his brain injury. He had his suspicions that their idea of solving a problem was to throw money at it. He didn't want to test out his theories in case his anger got the best of him. He was never angry around Peter. In fact he always felt calm around Peter, almost as calm as Doctor Lecter's sessions made him feel. Relaxed. Comfortable. He didn't want Peter's parents to change that and they probably would. For all the anger boiling inside of him since his Daddy's death, Will never wanted to show that side of himself to kind, friendly, cheerful Peter.

Peter's house was nice, clean, tidy – pristine. It was like a showhouse. Will hated it. It didn't feel real. He was grateful when they got to Peter's room. Peter's room was large with lots of natural light, but that wasn't the best part, the best part was it was practically a menagerie. There were birds and bird cages everywhere, a large extended rat enclosure and drawings of animals plastered the walls.

"Wow did you draw these? They're amazing." They really were, they were sketchy and rough but the amount of care and detail clearly put into them made them beautiful.

"Y-yeah. I want to be an artist for nature magazines or something."

"I thought you wanted to be a vet?"

"I do! Th-th-this is a c-contingency plan."

“Smart.” At that Peter gave Will a small smile, and the protective beast in Will rose once again. He smothered it and leaned against the door. “Let’s do this thing.”

They watched a terrible movie with a talking dog and made fun of it the whole time. When that finished, they attempted to make cookies and almost burnt the house down. Will had never had so much fun in his life.

“I’ve never had so much fun in my life,” he said.

“Me too” Peter said.

“It felt like a betrayal,” Will told Hannibal during their next session. “A betrayal of my Daddy. Because that date was the best day of my life, and I’m not supposed to have any of those after Daddy died.”

“You’re not supposed to or you wouldn’t like to?”

“Well,” Will blinked. “I guess a bit of both. I loved my Daddy; I still do, but I knew him better than anybody. He loved me because he knew I would mirror that love back to him. He loved me because I was the only person who could understand him. He loved me because he knew I was easy to mould. He tried to make me dependent on him. Always moved us around so I could never make long-term friends, taught me everything I know about fishing and engine fixing. He never let me go out late at night, terrified he would lose me, but I lost him first. I lost him first and I kind of hate him for it. Because he made me and he never gave a thought to what would happen to me after him. So I miss him and hate him and love him and it’s all tangled up in me. And now I feel guilty because I had a good day without him and he would never have allowed that.”

“I see.” Hannibal said. And Will startled and looked him directly in the eyes.

“You do,” he said, awed. “You really do, don’t you?”

When Aunty Phyllis took Will home, Will was surprised to see Uncle Jack in the dining room, pictures spread out all around him. Will never saw Uncle Jack anymore and when he did, if he ever tried to initiate conversation Jack just grunted until he went away. It pissed Will off to no end, so he decided to try again whilst Jack was pre-occupied. “What are all these pictures of?” He asked in a quiet voice.

“They’re the girls who’ve been abducted.”

Will studied the photos more carefully. “They look very similar to each other, don’t they?”

“Yeah, but there are no other connections. It’s driving me mad; I can’t understand how he’s picking them when they’re all so different, it’s impossible to tell who the next victim will be or what he’s doing to them.”

“Well, they’re probably dead.” Will muttered. “Otherwise he wouldn’t be moving on to the next ones. It’s like a collection. A collection of candy bars, and one of them will be his Golden Ticket.”

“What?” Jack barked.

“Can’t you see? He’s picking these girls because they remind him of someone. Someone he wants to kill. The Golden Ticket. Otherwise he wouldn’t be so careful in their abductions, so loving. He probably loves the Golden Ticket but doesn’t want to hurt her, so he hurts them instead.”

Jack looked at him. “you can tell all that from photos? You really do have pure empathy huh?”

“Pure empathy?” Will stared at Jack. “Pure empathy – who told you I have pure empathy Uncle Jack?”

“Hannibal did, he didn’t speak to you about this?”

“No.”

“You betrayed me. I thought you understood me but you went behind my back. What are you trying to do to me Doctor? Are you moulding me just like Daddy did?” Will’s voice cracked.

“Will,” Hannibal said, voice deadly soft. “Will how did you get my number?”

“Stole it from Uncle Jack’s phone how else do you think I got it?”

“Will you need to calm down.”

“I can’t listen to you - you’re a liar –”

“I never lied to you Will.”

“Yes you- okay well maybe you didn’t lie but you definitely went behind my back. Omitted the truth. When were you going to tell me I have ‘pure empathy’, huh? And why did you have to tell Uncle Jack? Why?”

“I was waiting to tell you Will. I told Jack because he asked me for updates on you – he worries about you Will. I had to tell him. I wanted to ease you into the revelation. Medical terms can be big things to adjust to Will and you have a lot on your plate already. Your grief, moving to a new place, a new relationship. I’m here to help you Will, can’t you understand that?”

“I can’t- I can’t trust you anymore. Goodbye Hannibal.”

It was only later at night, when Will couldn't sleep, that he realised he had called Doctor Lecter by his first name. He groaned, rolled under the covers and struggled to bury his thoughts.

He couldn't. The words 'pure empathy' chased his brain over and over. There were words to describe him. Words that fit him, that made him less of a freak. And Doctor Lecter had found those words for him. He should've said thank you instead of snapping at the man. But fear had taken a hold of Will and Will had always been rude when he was scared.

If the previous Friday had been the best day of Will's life, Thursday was the worst. He'd had barely any sleep, his conversations with Jack and Doctor Lecter running on loops all night. Uncle Jack refused to look at him and kept a wide berth of distance between them that morning. Will felt like he didn't even have it in him to be angry anymore. That changed through the day though.

Peter was his usual cheerful self around Will and Will tried to use Peter as a paddle. To ground him. It didn't work. For all Will liked Peter, and he really liked Peter, they were completely different creatures. Will wasn't right for Peter. He understood that after the night before. Will was too angry. He'd only drag Peter down. He tried to explain it to Peter during History but it didn't go well. "I care for you Peter. I care for you too much. I'm a mess. I can't control myself anymore and I don't want to lose control around you."

"C-can't I try to help you Will?"

"I think I'm beyond help, thank you though."

"So wh-what, you're b-breaking up with me?"

"I guess I am. I'm sorry Peter."

He made sure to look at Peter. To absorb the pain and grief that was all his fault. To take in Peter's features as though it was the last time he'd ever see him. Peter would probably never want anything to do with Will again. That was good. That would mean Will had protected Peter from his own special brand of fucked up.

Art went by quickly and then it was the last lesson before lunch: biology with headmaster Verger. Will was dreading it. He felt like a walking talking target and was sure Headmaster Verger was finally going to pick on him.

He was wrong.

“Peter Bernardone. Why don’t you answer this question seeing as you should know *a lot* about horses? Are horses colour blind?”

“N-no.”

“Are you *s-s-s-s-sure?”* Will felt his anger suddenly swallow him whole but was unable to move, just watch.

“Y-yes.”

“What colours can they see then?”

“I – I – I can’t remember.”

“you can’t remember? Pathetic. How are you ever gonna become a vet with a memory like a goldfish? Vets need to know things, you know. They need brains. Shame you don’t have any anymore. Maybe that horse should’ve killed you while it had the chance – it would’ve been more merciful that way. I think-”

“Shut up” Will roared, having stood up in a sudden motion, pens clattering to the floor. “Shut up you monster, the only one who doesn’t have brains here is you!”

The room was silent. Nobody moved.

Until, “I’ll see you here after school, Mr Graham,” the headmaster sneered.

“You were very brave,” Abigail said, wringing her hands. “How are you so brave?”

“I’m not,” Will replied. “I’m foolish.”

“Oh.”

School finished and Will called home. “I’m gonna be home late. No. Yeah, I’ll be with Peter. Of course. Okay see you later Aunty.”

Resigned he walked to his fate.

“You know, Mr Graham, we brought you into this esteemed establishment out of pity. We can easily kick you out again. But we won’t. Do you want to know why, Mr Graham? Not because you have good grades, because you don’t. Certainly not for your charming personality. We’re keeping you because we own you. You’d be nothing without us. You think I don’t know your story? Poor boy, lost his Daddy.” Will gritted his teeth. “Well, you ever

think your Daddy wanted to die? Wanted to get away from his freak of a son?" Will's hands clenched into fists so tight he could feel blood trickling under his nails. "You think I don't know what a freak you are? I've been watching how you hide with that idiot Peter from everyone else. Why would you hide if you weren't a freak? Probably got it from your Daddy's side huh?"

Will had had enough.

He launched himself at Headmaster Verger and kicked him fiercely. The headmaster let out a loud squeal before trying to kick back. Will ignored him, fuelled by his adrenaline and nothing else. He grabbed the headmasters head and slammed it against the wall. There was a satisfying thud, so he did it again.

And again.

And again.

He could hear pleas and gurgling and thuds and then a sickening *crack*. He kept going - thud, thud, thud – until his lungs were gasping for breath. He dropped the man like he was poisonous and the headmaster collapsed against the floor, his face a bloody mess, hanging limp against his neck.

Will smiled. Took out his phone. Dialled Doctor Lecter. "Hello?" he asked, voice calm but raspy. "I think I need your help."

Help

Chapter Summary

Help arrives in form of Doctor Lecter

Chapter Notes

Sorry this is late but I hope you enjoy. I am writing a second part to this series focusing on what's going on with Abigail and Matthew but I don't know how long it will take to finish.

Doctor Lecter entered the room cautiously, as though it were a minefield. Upon spotting the headmaster's body he froze. Then slowly, very slowly, the corners of his lips twitched up into a smile. "I suppose that this is your headmaster then?"

Will laughed at that, feeling more alive than he had in ages. "Yes," he chuckled. "Or at least he *was*."

"I see. So why did you call me?"

"Well, I certainly wasn't gonna call Uncle Jack now was I? I thought you would be the only one who could help. Despite my outburst last night."

"I certainly can." Doctor Lecter assessed the body carefully before picking it up and tossing it over his shoulder as if it weighed nothing at all. Will gaped at him. Doctor Lecter's eyes twinkled and something in Will clicked.

"You've – you've done this before haven't you?" Doctor Lecter winked at him. "You have! You're a serial killer aren't you – you're clearly experienced."

"Does that bother you Will?"

Will opened his mouth. Closed it. Then shrugged. "I guess not. Not as much as it should." Doctor Lecter smiled. "Good. Now go ahead and alert me if anyone is around."

Will stepped out the door and it was as though he had stepped back into reality. He shook his head. There was nothing he could do anymore except go forwards, he'd crossed the line and there was no going back. He looked around carefully, spotting no-one. He raced to the car

park and saw no one on the way. He had waited long enough for Doctor Lecter to arrive that it seemed most people had left the premises. He didn't see anyone on his way back to the room either. "It's all clear."

"Wow you have quite the setup." They were at Doctor Lecter's house, having made it through to the car unseen and driven with no problem. Doctor Lecter had led Will to his secret basement, carrying the headmaster's body the whole time. It was certainly spacious, with shiny clean metal surfaces and all sorts of torture implements. Will was impressed.

"I do, don't I?" Doctor Lecter said quite smugly. Will got the sense that he was extremely proud of his hunting prowess and everything that went with it. Will got the sense that he had the right to be proud of himself.

Will's thought back through their therapy sessions, running through them for clues. "Wait a minute - this was your plan all along wasn't it? You wanted me to kill someone. You were slowly encouraging the anger in me, weren't you?"

"My cunning boy, you noticed," Doctor Lecter sounded so proud of him, Will felt his heart melt into mush.

He focused on the task at hand. "So, so what do we do next? Are you going to display him?"

"That's up to you Will."

Will wrinkled his nose. "No, he doesn't deserve it. But if we don't display him how will we explain away his disappearance?"

"I believe I know our dear victim's sister."

"Wait, do you mean Margot Verger?" Doctor Lecter looked at him curiously. "She's my art teacher," Will rushed to explain, "she's really nice."

"Yes, and she has been fighting the urge to kill her brother since childhood. If we enlighten her of our situation I'm sure she'll be of assistance."

"If you think so."

They decided that they would chop up the headmaster's body into small pieces to make it easier to get rid of. So Doctor Lecter instructed Will on how to operate the bandsaw. He guided Will with a hand on his wrist. Will felt fragile in his warm tight grip. He should've hated it. Instead he felt safe. It reminded him of how he felt around his Daddy, small and protected. As the saw cut through flesh like butter with a whir, Will felt thrilled. He hadn't felt so in control of himself since before his father's death. Once Doctor Lecter was sure Will knew what he was doing he left to call Margot Verger. Will missed his touch instantly.

By the time Doctor Lecter had returned, Will had managed to cut up the arms and legs. Doctor Lecter smiled warmly at him and said, “I’ll do the rest.” He spoke as he worked. “Margot agreed to come over for dinner tonight. I thought it best to have the conversation in person. You are, of course, invited.”

“Of course,” Will echoed, a smile on his lips. He stepped closer. “Thank you Doctor Lecter. For helping me and for… making me feel alive again.”

Doctor Lecter stopped what he was doing and turned to face Will. “It’s a pleasure Will. And please, call me Hannibal. After this you’ve certainly earned the right.”

“Okay Hannibal.” The name sounded strange on his tongue, but right. He observed the man before him, this strange man who was so polite and so led by his instincts at the same time and felt a surge of possession overtake him. Before he knew what he was doing he was kissing Hannibal. Hannibal immediately reacted with little nips at Will’s lips, it felt heavenly. When Will drew back for air, he was panting. “I guess this is no stranger than you being a serial killer,” he chuckled. Hannibal looked at him fondly. “Is it weird that after all this I don’t want to let you go?”

“It is perfectly natural Will. And I would advise you to listen to your nature whenever you can.”

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